

Testimony of

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Before the

Education Committee

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Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

I strongly encourage the legislature to pass this legislation. As a school librarian I support student access to a wide range of literature without the threat of book banning or public shaming of teachers and librarians. CT public schools aim to graduate critical thinkers who are able to consider diverse perspectives and lifelong readers. Limiting access to books is a disservice to our students, and allows a small, vocal, divisive faction of our society to make educational decisions in our schools instead of teachers. The Educator Bill of Rights will help ensure this does not happen in our state. In addition, I strongly support play based learning, which is developmentally appropriate and the best way for children to learn and develop executive functioning skills, the biggest determinant for future success. I have witnessed over my 28 years in education the time for play continually dwindle while assessments, sedentary individual technology-based tasks, and ever-more demanding curricula have come to dominate the primary classroom. Is it a coincidence that along with these changes children are more dysregulated, perform more poorly, and express more dislike for school? We must bring back joy in learning and return to teaching young children in developmentally appropriate ways through play. As Jean Piaget said, 'Play is the work of childhood.' Finally, CT must catch up with the rest of the United States and move the kindergarten start age back to Sept. 1. Starting children in kindergarten at age 4 is completely inappropriate with the current national demands of school. Furthermore, families with the means often take it upon themselves to correct this damaging policy by holding out their children with fall birthdays. Consequently, most kindergarten classes (and therefore every grade that follows) have a huge age range from the

very young to those over a year older because their families have 'red-shirted' them to give them a better chance of success in school. Let's level the playing field for all kids and get CT caught up with national policy of starting children in kindergarten at age 5. School is extremely demanding beginning right in kindergarten and enrolling 4 year-olds is counter-productive. Thank you for considering the point of view of the educators on the front lines and let's get this legislation passed!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

